

God's Will in regards to the Matters of Government and Citizenship.

The following excerpts will give additional biblically sound instruction regarding not only God's will in the matters of government and of citizenship, but, at the end, also the biblical facts and pledges which Christian citizens could and should remember when they are mistreated by both evil government and citizens.

These excerpts have been taken from Frederick Gottlob Kuegele's *Book of Devotion: The Psalms with Prefaces, Summaries, and Prayers, for Family Use* (Pittsburg, Pennsylvania: American Lutheran Publication Board, 1895), pages 95-97, 136-137, & 70.

The page numbers of the quoted sections will be listed at the conclusion of each section in red print.

"Preface.

"A good and peace-loving government, by which full liberty of conscience is guaranteed all citizens to worship God according to his word and by which equity and righteousness is promoted, such a government is one of the greatest earthly blessings, one of the best temporal gifts. Such a government God gives to the people which he loves. Such a good and well ordered government God in his goodness has granted to our country and has preserved it since more than a century. Considering the good providence of God over our land we have great reason to say with joyful hearts: 'Blessed is the nation

whose God is the Lord'. [Ps. 33:12]. This our gratitude we should show by making the right use both of religious and civil liberty, according to the word of the Lord: 'Render unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's; and unto God the things that are God's'. [Matt. 22:21]. Using our liberty of conscience we should let the word of God in its fullness and purity dwell among us richly, causing the law to be preached in all its sharpness and the gospel in all its sweetness, and seeing that the sacraments are administered strictly in accordance with the Lord's institution. In the house of God our faces should be familiar and in all things we should adorn the gospel of Christ with a pious life. By the government we should deal loyally and honestly, performing the duties of citizens, paying taxes, obeying the laws, and so we should show ourselves both good Christians and good citizens. An example of a good ruler we have in the sixtieth Psalm" (page 95).

"Summary.

"Here David gives thanks to God for giving him so noble a kingdom and so prosperous a reign under which the fear of God greatly increased. Under Saul tyranny and oppression had been practiced, the priests of the Lord were innocently put to death, the fear of the Lord diminished, the ark of the covenant was little regarded [I Chron. 13:3], and the kingdom was hard pressed by the Philistines. Where a tyrant rules and God is not at home there can be neither peace nor prosperity. Nevertheless God preserved them a banner, his covenant, tabernacle, and mercy-seat, from which he heard the prayers of the

oppressed. Succeeding to the kingdom David brought the tabernacle to Jerusalem and greatly beautified the worship of the Lord introducing singers and instruments of music. He also subdued the surrounding nations and made Israel to rule from the borders of Egypt to the river Euphrates, wherefore he here enumerates various nations as being subject to him. This [sixtieth] psalm reminds us to pray for the spreading of David's, that is Christ's kingdom from sea to sea.

"Prayer.

"Praise and thanks be unto Thee, our bountiful Father in heaven, for all the good which Thou hast shown to us and our land. Preserve civil and religious liberty to us and our children, and grant peace and prosperity. Cause the kingdom of Thy Son to flourish among us and keep us in the true and saving faith. Amen" (page 96).

"Summary.

"This [sixty-first] psalm was a prayer for the king of Israel that God should be his strong tower and that his reign should be long and prosperous. Frequent changes of rulers are a misfortune to a land as Solomon [Prov. 28:2] says: 'For the transgression of a land many are the princes thereof: but by a man of understanding and knowledge the state thereof shall be prolonged'. The adage is true: A new king, a new law, and this is seldom for the better. From this psalm we should learn to pray for the stability of our government, that god may at all

times grant us rulers who govern wisely in agreement with the fundamental principles both of the general and state government, and that our country be spared destructive revolutions and wars. This should be the petition of every Christian citizen, because blessed [is] the land having good, old, settled and stable institutions. By its peculiar wording this psalm reminds us of that King of Israel who sits on the throne of David for ever, the king under whose scepter we go in and out and find pasture for the soul. {John 10:9}.

"Prayer.

"O God, Thou King of kings and Lord of lords, thanks be unto Thee, because Thou hast given to our land a good and a liberal government. Endow the civil officers with wisdom to rule this wide land and with integrity to seek the good of the people. Preserve the liberty which we enjoy to children and children's children, and increase among us the kingdom of Thy Son Jesus Christ. Amen" (page 97).

"Preface.

"Our beloved country and the world generally is full of tears, suffering, and misery. Neither can it be otherwise, because the land is full of sin and we are so thankless toward God who has given us his precious word, and has heaped so many blessings upon us. Surely we must confess, the Lord has favored us before many. He has planted us in a goodly land, has crowned our country with peace and plenty, and has given us full

liberty to worship him according to his word, and surely we should be a God-fearing and virtuous nation. But alas! his word is despised, his precious truth is corrupted, his holy name is blasphemed every day; cursing is heard in our streets and the service of mammon and manifold vices prevail in the land. O that the merciful Father in heaven by his Holy Spirit would send an awakening on our people! O that he would cause one and all to repent and to be converted to Jesus Christ our Savior, and to be filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ, unto the glory and praise of God. [Phil. 1:11]. Doing this we shall be blessed in body and soul, in church and state, in house and field. But if we continue in stubbornness and will not obey the gospel of Christ we willfully bring ourselves into temporal calamities and eternal destruction. So let us lay to heart the warning contained in the eighty-first Psalm" (page 136).

"Preface.

"As just rulers and a good government are a noble gift of God, by which virtue and justice are protected, wickedness repressed, and peace with all its concomitant blessings is promoted; so tyrannical rulers and a corrupt or incompetent government are one of the scourges which God uses for the punishment of a people. Hence when God grants us a good government we should be thankful to him, praying for the continuance of this his gift, and we should improve quiet days to worship God and to build his kingdom according to his word and should practice all civil virtues as good citizens seeking the good of the land. But when it pleases God to scourge

us with bad and corrupt government we should submit ourselves without murmuring against him. Least of all should we undertake to help ourselves by unlawful means, bearing in mind Solomon's warning words: 'My son, dear thou the Lord and the king: and meddle not with them that are given to change; for their calamity shall rise suddenly'. [Prov. 24:21]. Yet as good citizens of a Republic we should use those means which the Constitution of the land and the commonwealth gives into the hands of the people to correct wrongs and to remedy abuses. Meanwhile a bad government should increase our longing for that glorious kingdom, where injustice and corruption are not known, where we shall follow the Lamb wherever he goes. Now let us hear the eighty-second Psalm.

"Summary.

"This [eighty-second] psalm is intended for the instruction of civil rulers, magistrates, and all in authority. Asaph calls the rulers gods, because they have an authority given unto them, but he reminds them that the Highest Judge sees them in their office, and they must die like other men and must come before the judgment-seat of the Supreme One. Hence he charges them not to favor the wicked who have money and influence, but to judge justly and to help the oppressed. This psalm should be heeded also by employers, overseers, masters, mistresses, and all who exercise any kind of authority. They all should remember, there is a Lord over them, and it shall be done to them as they do to others. At the end of this psalm reference is had to the

kingdom of Christ who should inherit the heathen and possess the uttermost parts of the earth. [Ps.2:8]. Certainly a peculiar King, who does not punish sin and demand righteousness, but forgives sin and imputes righteousness. To this King let us hold.

“Prayer.

“Thanks be unto Thee, Thou Ruler of nations, because to this our native land Thou hast granted free institutions of government, under which we enjoy both civil and religious liberty. Protect by Thy mighty hand the government of this free Republic, and suffer it not to be overthrown by revolutions and civil wars; and always grant us honest and wise men for offices high and low. Amen.

“Preface.

“The true believers are and remain God’s beloved children, his hidden ones, even when he allows the enemies to torment and persecute them and behaves himself as though their affliction did not concern him. The Scriptures testify that judgment begins at the house of God [I Pet. 4:17], and whom the Lord loveth he correcteth, even as a father the son in whom he delighteth. [Prov. 3:12]. As a true Father God is diligent in chastening his children that they should not be condemned with the world. [I Cor. 11:32]. If we but cling to him and do not let him go, it is indeed not possible for God to forsake us; his own faithfulness must prevent this. Therefore we can rest assured, when the need is

greatest he will hide us from the enemy, as a hen hides her chicklings under her wings when danger is near. He that protected Moses and Aaron against the rebellious Israelites, He that hid Jeremiah and Baruch that they mighty in Judah durst not lay hands on them [Jer. 36:26], the same will also cover us with the shadow of his hand from spiritual and bodily enemies and in the very jaws of death. This comforting assurance is imparted in the eighty-third Psalm ([pages 137-139](#)).

“When the Most High divided to the nations their inheritance, when he separated the sons of Adam, he set the bounds of the people according to the number of the children of Israel’. [Deut. 32:7, 8]. In all ages God has so governed the world that the great events of history worked together for the promotion of his kingdom. Often indeed the Lord suffered his people to be oppressed, year even sold them under the power of the heathen, but the very tyranny exercised against them was turned into a blessing. Was not the cruelty of Pharaoh the occasion for Israel to flee from Egypt and to become an independent nation? Did not Jews and Gentiles by their persecutions promote the spreading of Christianity and bring about their own destruction? Moreover the history of Hagar and many others shows that this same providence of God, by which he overrules mighty nations, extends also to the meanest fugitive and the lowliest on earth. Now God is the same today as of yore. He is not grown old and weak. His eyes are sharp to detect the distresses of his people, and his hand is as mighty to help as in the days of Joseph. Let our hearts

trust and our lips praise his wonderful providence, as we are charged in the first part of the forty-fourth Psalm.

“Summary.

“Israel did not obtain the land of Canaan because it was so excellent a nation and worthy of God’s favor; neither did the children of Israel conquer the land by their own valor and superiority in arms. The Lord gave them this goodly land because he loved them, and he cast out the Canaanites because of the abominations which they practiced” (page 70).

“Preface.

“In his word of truth God has promised grace and every blessing to all who trust in him and who under the cross and in the very midst of death persevere in faith, and this his promise God has always kept towards all his children. But flesh and blood is quickly discouraged in the day of affliction. It is ready to murmur and, notwithstanding all God’s promises, the flesh soon argues, God tarried too long or did not want to help. Seeing the prosperity of the wicked and the wrongs which they inflict on others the old Adam is prone to say: ‘Shall the ungodly enjoy blessing? Where is the righteousness of God who has said that the wickedness of the wicked shall not remain unpunished? Why does God forget those who call on his name, honor and praise him, and walk in his ways?’ This perverse inclination of our nature we should learn to know and should resist it

accustoming ourselves patiently to wait for God’s appointed time to help, knowing this that his tarrying is but for a little while. [John 16:16]. It is well to remember the saying of Augustine: ‘Earthly prosperity is an indication of eternal damnation. If in this world thou wilt be without strife, thou shalt not rule with Christ in eternal life.’ Rightly does the poet sing: The greater cross the nearer heaven, who without cross is without God. Of this we are reminded in the latter part of the forty-fourth Psalm” (page 71).